

OUR JERS

TOC H JOURNAL



NOVEMBER
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THREEPENCE

Toc H for New Friends

What it is

Toc H is out to win men's friendship and their service for the benefit of others. It stands, always but especially now, when values which seemed permanent are being discarded, for truth and understanding, for unselfishness and fair dealing, for individual freedom based on a practical Christian outlook on life. Toc H works under a Royal Charter granted by H.M. King George V in 1922.

How it started

It began with Talbot House (Toc H is the signaller's way of saying T.H.) opened in 1915 in the Belgian town of Poperinghe, the nearest habitable point in the Ypres Salient. It was intended to be a sort of soldiers' rest house where men back from the line could find refreshment for body, mind and spirit. Owing largely to the Rev. P. B. Clayton, an Army Chaplain in charge, it soon secured a reputation in the British Expeditionary Force as a place of friendliness and cheerfulness. It welcomed men not merely to a meal and writing material but to the small homely things that mean so much. Many who used it found their way to the Chapel in the loft and gained fresh strength to realise that "behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the Eternal Realities."

1919 to 1939

"Tubby" Clayton and a few survivors saw the need to recapture in peace-time the spirit of comradeship in common service and sacrifice which they had learnt in war and to pass it on to a new generation. The idea spread. By 1939 Toc H was established in over 1,000 places in the United Kingdom and had forged a chain linking 500 more throughout the Empire and beyond. The Old House at Poperinghe and its Upper Room, given back to Toc H, has been visited by many thousands, who have gained, as those before them, fresh strength to play their part steadfastly and cheerfully. More than 20 hostels (called Marks) have been opened and are available for those who get the chance to use them.

What it means in practice

In his efforts to further the objects for which Toc H exists, each member has what is called the Toc H Compass to guide him. Its Four Points may thus be summarised:

To Think Fairly. To win a chivalry of mind, whereby he will not be overready to condemn honest difference, but will be humble-minded in his judgment of great issues, avoiding prejudice and striving for truth.

To Love Widely. To learn the habit of trying day by day to understand and to help all sorts and conditions of men.

To Witness Humbly. Toc H is rooted in the supreme conviction that the great thing is to spread the weekday Christian Gospel. Every member is pledged to do his blundering bit by carrying the contagion quietly. The point here is that lives speak while words are merely spoken.

To Build Bravely. (a) To be resolute in building his own life, without forgetting that what matters most is not what he can do for himself but what he can do for others. (b) To see in Toc H a bridge between himself and the lives of others, and to build it bravely, regarding his share in doing so as a sacred trust.

Membership

Toc H wants men who are willing to put service before self, are trying to think fairly and are willing to offer friendship. You probably won't be asked to join, but if you feel you want to share in this great adventure, let us know. It will cost you no more than you can afford. If you would like to know more about it, ask any member you know or write to Toc H Headquarters, 47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1.

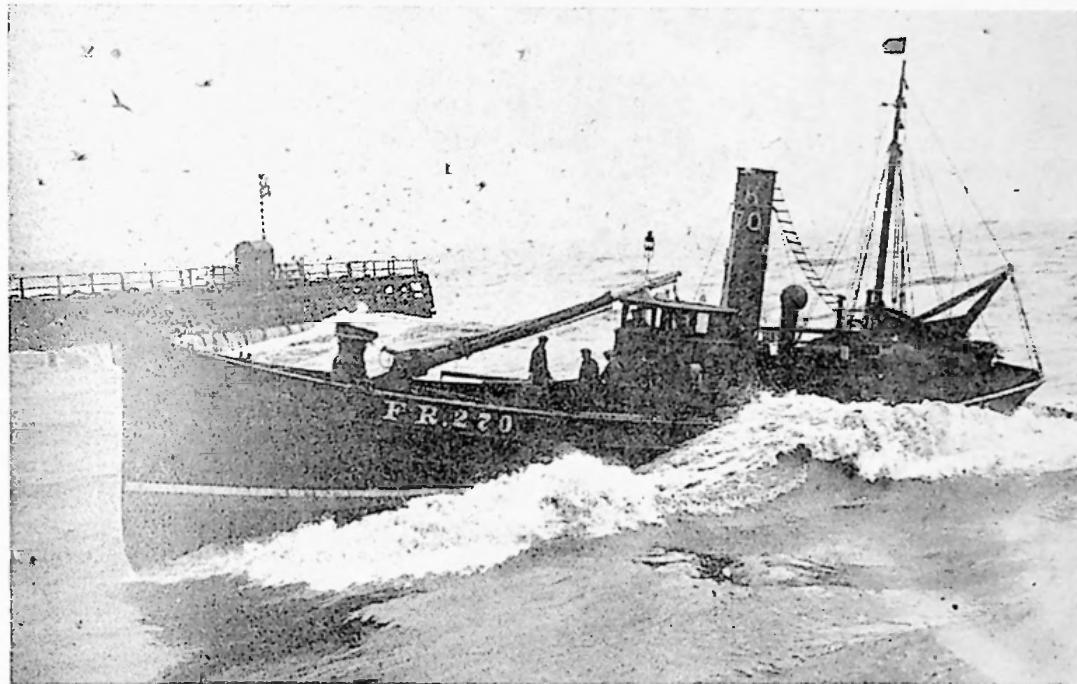
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No. 10

OUR DUE TO THE DRIFTER

TUBBY here gives us a glimpse of some of his friends in Orkney.

ALLOW me to introduce you to a world of which John Citizen is ignorant, although he stands indebted to the same. Even the Big Ship sailor of experience can exercise the arts of his profession without much knowledge of the Drifter-men. That is, in peacetime; but when wars, invented upon land, invade the seas, Big Ships become to some extent aware of drifters, then attendant on their needs. So, if you please, regard these random notes as put together by a backward student, who has a duty which he would fain discharge. These staunch examples of sea brotherhood have constantly revived him when depressed by some bad news concerning

the loss of friends. Day after day he has been privileged to travel in these drifters, to and fro. To love them is a liberal education.

Drifters are well-found ships of small dimensions. Their registered tonnage seldom exceeds forty; but fully equipped, and with their catch on board, their gross may total more than eighty. Their personnel includes two or three deck hands, Master and Mate, the Chief and two firemen (for they are coal burning), a cook, and a ship's boy, though these two posts are frequently united in one person, who very often is the skipper's son. Drifters are mainly owned in partnership between, at least, the senior men on board.

Brothers and cousins, nephews and connections, are very frequent in the drifter world. Steam-drifters have developed much of late, though a sail is not entirely abandoned. The "diesel" age has not yet influenced the larger type of drifter very much. It still relies upon the good old practice of shovelling coal and hoping for the best. In times of peace these drifters are intended to spend five days upon their fishing grounds and then to make for home not too remote. With reasonable luck they can rely upon five nights out and a week-end at home. They earn their money hardly through the week; hardship and peril are their constant portion. But, none the less, they are attached to homes more closely than the trawlerman can be. Moreover, trawlers are mainly owned by large companies, a process which drifters have still managed to avoid, thus the whole atmosphere of partnership is seldom seen to better advantage. The drifter is their pride, their home from home, and her good name and her efficiency are their first thought. Therefore, this little team, which numbers eight, or possibly ten, are knit into a working brotherhood in which each man has got his proper status. They all live in one capacious cabin, warmed by a stove, surrounded by their bunks, and chiefly furnished with a solid table beneath a jet or two of carbide gas. This is their private common-room, to which the general passenger is not invited, unless the weather is extremely bad. In point of fact exceptions prove the rule, and very few who travel frequently have not experienced an invitation. Foolish are they who have rejected it; for, down below, men who are well aware of multitudinous seas, do congregate, and stories with a genuine salt are told with never a foul word or innuendo. I had better get it over at this stage, since drifter crews do not like compliments. But I must risk their wrath by simply saying that, in a fairly wide experience, I have never known their like by land or sea in their profound respect for Providence. Among them an old-fashioned Godliness is rooted; and the younger men, though naturally more liberal in their outlook, seldom shrug their shoulders at the faith of their fathers. The

practice of religion is not rare. The Bible, if not thumbed as in old days, is a familiar Book, and natural piety goes hand in hand with manly conduct and marine efficiency. I do not think this is an overstatement.

Drifters are mainly drawn from East Coast ports upon the Scottish Mainland. Lowestoft smacks have not their wartime station in these waters. Grimsby and Hull are mainly represented by deep sea trawlers of the modern size with crews which number twenty-seven or more.

In 1905, when I first went to sea as a spare hand upon a Grimsby trawler, her complement was nine, and she was built no larger than the drifter is today. I therefore feel at home amongst these drifters and free to study these minute examples of what the brotherhood of man can mean, if based upon the brotherhood of God.

Most of the drifters working in these parts come from Buckie, the Moray Firth, or Fraserburgh or Peterhead or Nairn, or ports in Fife, such as Leven and Methil. Chartered to serve as carriers to the Fleet, their work is diverse and never through. I must not here attempt to indicate more than the general nature of their duties, but I would have the reader well aware that they are arduous and perilous. Drifters do not mount guns on their fore-peak, and very few of them can reply to air-attack—that most inhuman menace which has so poisoned the relationship between one race and every decent seaman in the North-West of Europe.

'Ma' Wray

But let me turn again to happier thoughts. During the autumn of 1939 I heard of Sister Wray and her good works from many of the drifters in the Flow. Her name was little less than magic. She was a household word throughout their fleet. When, therefore, I was told that the Church Army would be prepared to let us have her help, and that the Diocese could bring her here and pay her most exiguous living wage, it seemed an answer to our direst need. Often, in cases of this character, the workers, on arrival, disappoint; but Sister Wray, with her own adjutant in Sister

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Stanley, also of the Church Army, has truly exceeded all our hopes. The Chairman of Toc H Orkney gallantly secured a house at a high price and charged us a low rent. Lord Wakefield and his wife, who has inspired so much that he has done, gave their assistance;



own clientele, drawn from the days of peace. For twenty years she has been Mother Carey to the drifters, migrating at all seasons of the year to the appropriate port and digging in. Now she is doing some work up here to the immense delight of her wide circle of fishermen frequenting tortured seas, and tempting Pentland Firth in all its moods.

I very well remember one occasion when one of them was desperately ill. His drifter was near Kirkwall at the time, and he was landed early in the morning. They took him to the Civil Hospital, where every bed was full. Someone then said that Wakefield House would be the next best thing, and so indeed it proved; for old "Ma" Wray, having no bed to spare, gave up her own which she had very

recently deserted. She simply said the bed was warmed already; therein he lay until he was restored.

Soldiers are not her speciality, but nowadays she has branched out towards them, and hundreds are included as her sons, no less relying upon her patient love. Fifteen men came only the other morning at four a.m., having been up all night, kept from their billet in a further island by a bad storm precluding their return. She rose to let them in out of the rain, and simply asked how many they might be. When they replied "Fifteen" she was amazed, since she had fifteen sandwiches left over from supper on the previous night, and fifteen cups of tea were soon provided. She did not then consider it worth while going to bed again. She simply said she liked an early morning start.

The united ages of Sister Wray and Sister Stanley would take us back to the Crimea. These two ladies here have played their part beyond expression and are carrying on, come what may.

Last week I had the honour of escorting "Ma" Wray across the Flow to see her friends. The Admiral had most kindly lent his drifter, which would have been beflagged if it were not wartime. The wind and rain and sea were all incessant; but, like Britannia, "Ma" Wray found them stimulating and drew upon an inexhaustible fund of reminiscences, in which there was not one unkindly word. The little wheelhouse purred appreciation. When we had crossed the Flow the drifter men deserted in large numbers in order to obtain a word with her. She held a six hours' concord in the snug cabin of the Mission Ship which recently arrived. When we at last removed her, by persuasion, she climbed across a long array of drifters and thanked us all in turn for her day out.

Toc H and the Drifters

Among these men, Toc H begins to be a force to reckon with; it has adherents. It has not yet achieved a definite propinquity to their hard lives, nor has it many members in the drifters. But in some places, such as Peterhead, it is well known with a fine repu-

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tation, based on the teachings of a saintly minister who, some years back, passed to God's nearer presence. This clergyman, whose name I never knew until I came to Orkney, must indeed have been an Apostolic character. No ship which hails from Peterhead forgets him, though a minority were of his Church. He built Toc H, not as a vague conception tending to social service, but as a Christian Brotherhood indeed, which steadily demanded faith and works. No doubt he was discouraged now and then, sometimes let down and often disappointed; but what he did will last. God's fruits remain.

Down in the cabin of a certain drifter I overheard the following conversation : " Now let me hear you repeat the Four Points of the Toc H Compass, as I told you"—" No, that won't do. You have got them wrong again. Can any gentleman repeat them, please? They mean a lot to us at Peterhead." In that especial drifter I discovered that five of the men were members of Toc H.

The Skipper's story

But my last note is bound to be concerning a certain drifter and her fine performance. *Daisy II* is her name, and Skipper Gatt, D.S.C., her Master. She performed attendant duties on the *Royal Oak*. The Big Ship's company took pride in her, and used to sing of *Daisy* as their sweetheart, as she returned them to their great steel home. We heard them last October in the Flow :—

Daisy, Daisy, give us your answer do!

Here is a record of the answer given.

" I was tender to the battleship *Royal Oak* from September 17, 1939, to the fateful morning of October 14, 1939, when she was sunk. I was very well acquainted with a great number of officers and men, and I was at her side every day and tied alongside her nearly every night. The night before the disaster I took a big liberty party from Scapa Pier just as the sun set; and it was a lovely evening.

" I had my orders for next day; but, sad to say, they were never required, as she was doomed in the early hours. It was at three minutes past one o'clock in the morning that the first explosion occurred, and I jumped on

deck just as I came out of bed, and the rest of the crew did the same. We could see nothing as it was dark, but the Officer of the Watch spoke to me, and it appeared he did not know what took place. I got orders to raise steam immediately; so I told the engineer to raise up the steam, and I jumped into the cabin and put on my trousers and my shoes.

" I went up on deck again and right forward on the drifter, but still couldn't see anything to indicate what happened; and as far as anybody on board the battleship—they couldn't tell either. I asked the Lieutenant of the Marines if it was one of the big guns, but he said that one of the Midshipmen had gone for'ard to investigate.

" By this time a lot of officers and men were on the quarter-deck with their coats on over their pyjamas. My mate went away back to his bunk again, thinking all was clear, but the cook and I were standing at our hatch forward when the next three big explosions occurred—that was about twelve or fourteen minutes after the first.

" I told the cook to cut the rope, and I ran to the wheelhouse to telegraph for full astern, but the half round on the top rail broke with the strain and the cook cried ' I haven't my knife'. I told him to throw off the rope from the bollard, so the rope was never cut, and the Lieutenant threw off the stern rope, but it went into the propeller.

" By this time the battleship began to heel over and her big blister, or bilge, caught our bilge and lifted us about twenty-five feet out of the water for'ard, and the quarter deck was in the water at the port side, so, as the battleship heeled to starboard, we heeled to port, and that made a big gap between us. Then we tore clear of the bilge, and I stopped the engine immediately. One of my deck-hands did not realise the position, so I gave him a lifebuoy and said ' Take that, and use it, if need be'. But he said ' No, you are a married man and I am single, and you have nothing yourself'. Neither of us required it, and a great blessing, too.

" Now the great work followed. There was only one man aboard the drifter who went into the water, and he didn't know what

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way he got out, whether he was blown aboard or not. He couldn't tell us, he was in a state of shock.

"Well, we hauled the first twenty or twenty-five from the water on the starboard side, and by this time the great ship was out of sight and that was after only about seven minutes. Next, I lighted a gas lamp on the front of the wheelhouse and one on the top, and they shone on to our funnel, which was painted white and shone in the dark, and then the sailors gave a shout of 'We are alright'. I cried 'Yes' and said 'Swim towards us, and we will do our best'.

"I lifted one of our hatches to see if we were making water. As we were making very little I shouted to throw all hatches, lifebuoys, lifejackets and any planks that were on deck overboard, so that they might be of some help to the men in the water. Then the mate cried 'Hard to port!' So I turned first to port and then to starboard turn about, where we could see a lot of men. Then the worst began. The oil just covered the sea everywhere, and it was difficult to haul the men on board, as they had no clothing on and every rope was very slippery, so we had to do our best.

"I put out five or six S.O.S. messages on the whistle, but it appears nobody heard them; and one of the Lieutenant-Commanders did the same at short intervals. By this time we were pulling the men aboard with the utmost speed, and where we all got our strength from no one knows. But God was there, and it was our duty to save those dear men of ours.

"Then I had to manœuvre the ship from getting fouled on the battleship. As I couldn't see her, I had to act quickly and with

great care, for if we had gone foul of her I don't know what would have happened. But everything seemed to work in our favour, and we carried on, pulling men from the water all the time, and everyone was jet black with oil.

"After the cabin and engine room were filled I got the men to go down in the hold and make room for the others who were being pulled on board, and they all did exceedingly well in the circumstances.

"When we had about two hundred and fifty on board I thought the game was up; for, when I looked out on our port side, there was a light coming through the water, and I thought it was a torpedo. But it turned out to be a sailor with a lighted torch in his mouth, so you may know the relief that came to me when I saw what it was.

"Well, we carried on until 3.55 a.m., when I saw two boats with torches. We cruised round and round, but could neither see nor hear any more men in the water; so we steamed to another ship and landed our survivors, who totalled three hundred and eighty-six. Out of that number only three died, but there were a large number badly injured. However, we thought nothing of the work, for if it had been any other fishermen they would have done the same."

Daisy II still frequents these island-waters. She is not singular in her appearance; many men's eyes today, which never rested on the *Royal Oak*, have seen the *Daisy* without recognition, unless instructed by an older hand. But those who know can never sight the *Daisy* without a reverent pride in her performance; and any drifter "would have done the same".

IMPRESSIONS OF ICELAND - I.

NO ONE can yet say to what 'furrin parts' Toc H may be called for active service before the war is done and won. Its episode in France with the B.E.F. was brief but certainly not inglorious—like that of the Force to which it was attached. The centre of interest, which may well prove the decisive theatre of this winter's campaigning, is likely to be the Near East—and there before long

Toc H may be heard of. Meanwhile, we are already at work in a country which none of us expected to see involved in the world-struggle. On September 18, Dallas Ralph (H.Q.) and Geoffrey Johnston (late East Yorks Area Secretary) embarked for, and on September 26 landed in—Iceland.

It is no secret that British troops occupied Iceland on the fall of Denmark, to which the

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island owes allegiance, in order to forestall a probable German attempt to seize a Northern base for operations against ourselves and, later, the U.S.A. It is bound to be an isolated outpost of war and in the long darkness of the Arctic winter, now approaching, the troops' need of the kind of service that Toc H and other societies could give was plain to the authorities. So we were invited and went. Our men travelled with two representatives of the Y.M.C.A., and found the Salvation Army already at work on arrival.

What sort of a country have they gone to? This is what one of them says about it:—

"Here is the first of a series of impressions which it is hoped will 'move slowly southwards' at intervals during the coming months, but which, it is also hoped, will not have a damping effect on those at home!"

"What is the average Englishman's conception of Iceland? It is hard to know. Probably he has not got one at all, but if he has, the name has probably led him to conjure up visions of a lonely island covered with snow and ice, on which a few semi-wild people manage to eke out a precarious existence. The very ignorant may even think of Esquimaux, igloos and polar bears!

"Actually, Iceland is a land of mountains and glaciers, peat bogs and hot springs, with a coastline indented with fiords very similar to those in Norway. For a land so far north the climate is comparatively mild, at any rate in the south-west,

and reliably reported to be going milder. This is due to the beneficial influence of that obliging current—The Gulf Stream. Iceland, in fact, is not unlike the wilder parts of Scotland and the West of Ireland. The amount of land available for cultivation and pasturage is only a very small percentage, but where the thrifty Icelander has rescued a few acres from the wilderness he is rewarded by a rich grass which maintains first-class sheep and cattle. If the land is largely bare the seas at any rate abound in life and fishing is the prime commercial activity.

"The island, which is rather larger than Ireland, has a population no greater than that of a fair-sized English town, in other words—about 130,000—40,000 of whom live in Reykjavik, the capital. Considering the fact that almost every commodity, including wood and all building materials, have to be imported in exchange for mutton and fish, the standard of living seems remarkably high. The standard of learning and culture will bear comparison with any other country.

"For ten centuries this little community has maintained its struggle with hard nature almost undisturbed by the convulsions which have beset Europe. Then, in the spring of this year, came the German invasion of Denmark and Norway, and in one day a new epoch opened in the history of Iceland. For the British occupation was the natural sequel to the invasion of Denmark, and this fact is recognised by the majority of Icelanders, who bear us no ill-will for the action we have taken. Of the life of the British troops up here it is hoped to write later. Suffice it to say that they are happy and well, getting used to the climate and strange surroundings and ready for anything—be it Germans or weather!"

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Dallas Ralph is now home again and able to report that Geoffrey Johnston has secured a house for Toc H—no light task in a land where houses are scarce, and not, by the laws of the country easily available for occupation by foreigners.

As we go to press, Alec Churcher sails from a Northern port to join him in this arduous and fascinating job of work.

TOC H IN A NUTSHELL

MANY of us who are convinced members of Toc H experience a moment's sinking feeling when a stranger springs the question at us "What is Toc H?" We feel sure that if he would live and work with our Branch for a week he would begin to find the answer—but how to put it all in a few sentences, there's the rub.

The following experiment by a Group is, therefore, worth putting on paper. Let it be described in the Pilot's own words. He writes:—

"It came about this way. Crediton is a small town with a population of about three thousand, and ever since war broke out we have had varying lots of soldiers with us. Toc H has naturally been associated with them in various ways, and on many hands the question has been asked 'What is Toc H?' The enquirer could only wait for, or stomach, a brief reply, so as a Group, four years old, we set out on the bold experiment of trying to find a model answer to the problem in not more than twenty-five words. Twelve of our men took up the challenge, and after tearing up a lot of paper, the attached twelve answers resulted. They were each written by a different chap, and last Tuesday at our Group Meeting we tried to discover whether a model answer could be concocted from the twelve answers.

"Here the difficulty arose. Each answer was the outcome of a tremendous amount of thought and each answer was a man's honest opinion about this Christian Family that has come to mean so much to us. So we wisely left things where they stood and I send you the answers in case you may feel them worthy of use. They are answers coming from men who feel the desperate urge of being able 'to

Meanwhile, a very friendly British officer, not unknown as a writer, has given the boat a good shove-off by writing an excellent and simple explanation of Toc H for *The Midnight Sun* (Icelandic Series), the local newspaper for our troops. We all wish Alec and Geoffrey 'good hunting' and await the next despatch from Toc H-the-Farthest-North-ever.

TOC H IN A NUTSHELL

give a reason for the faith that is within them'. They are naturally not perfect, but coming, as they did, from men ranging almost from the Dustman to the Duke—well, they're grand, I think."

Here are the answers:—

WHAT IS TOC H?

1. Toc H is a Christian Family pledged by its good works and high living to leave this world a better place than when they entered it.
2. Toc H is a Christian group of men, willing to put service before self, to think fairly, and to offer friendship to others.
3. Toc H is a Christian Family drawn from all classes, religious denominations and political parties. A Family where all rank as equals. All members pledged to help in the well-being of their fellow men.
4. Toc H is practising Christian Ideals, and showing that Christianity does work.
5. Toc H is a group of men keen to welcome others who, like themselves, are prepared to build their lives on Christian principles and thereby enjoy the real fellowship of family life.
6. Toc H is a body of men who try and help humanity and strive to bring a higher standard of Christian living into the world.
7. Toc H is a cross-section of humanity, pledged to practise the adventurous art of living together as a true Christian Family.
8. Toc H is a social club for men, based mainly on religion, radiating mainly good deeds in the form of religion.
9. Toc H is caught—not learnt—an infectious spirit created by ordinary Christian men, who meet as a family to talk, laugh, think and pray.
10. Toc H is a world-wide family whose members, by their actions, thoughts and words, endeavour to set a Christian example to their fellow men.
11. Toc H is a non-denominational Christian Movement started during the Great War. It offers fellowship to men of all ranks. A welcome awaits all strangers at our weekly meetings.
12. When I think of all the queer mugs I've met in Toc H, I wonder why I stick it. And that's the reason, thank God.

LETTERS FROM PRISON

PAT Leonard has received two letters from his fellow-workers in Toc H B.E.F., now prisoners of war in Germany. One, from Hugh Pilcher, is dated July 7, the other, from Reg Staton, July 22; they were both delivered in November. They add a little more detail to the story of the last days in Mark I at Lille and of the capture of our men. The letters are written on the long narrow sheet of paper, folded three times, which is supplied to prisoners of war in Germany. It is ruled with lines which strictly limit the amount which can be written, and each prisoner is allowed to write only one letter a week.

Hugh Pilcher writes:—

"Rex and (Bonham) Carter reached House" (i.e., Mark I, Lille) "May 20. Told us to quit in 1 hour. No time for arrangements. Rex, Carter and Austin went one way and were captured same day. Madame Clemence" (their faithful French cook), "Platts, Reg and I went another way in Renault" (their little motor-van). "Car taken from us May 21. Reg and I captured that day. Last 5 days at House spent helping troops and 1,000's of Refugees—chiefly Belgian, a few English and Dutch. All hungry, thirsty, dirty and tired, they flocked into the House from 5 a.m. to midnight for food, tea, coffee, wash and rest. All rooms occupied at night. House full of weeping, worn and sad. We helped priests, nuns, men, women and children, including cripples on wheelbarrows, a day-old baby, its mother, wounded nuns. 40 nuns had walked many miles. Gudgen" (the British Consul) "and police sent British refugees from all parts to us. All other welfare bodies quitted May 19. We were the last to evacuate when we could do no more. We got many refugees away by lorry. We had Communion each Sunday. Prayers often in Chapel. Refugees and troops attended prayers. Confident God helped us in our task and is helping us in our prison camp. Carter, Reg and I all fit, Rex and Austin in another camp. Nice garden, lovely mountain scenery. Courteous staff. Our greetings to all." He adds a message to relatives and ends, characteristically, "Happy is that unit and happier still its jobmaster in whose team there is no passenger."

In the other letter Reg Staton writes:—

"It was an interesting and thrilling time we had before we left France. We saw our friends off on a lorry, and young Albert" (from the café opposite the House), "next his dad and mother, waved us a fond farewell. We surrendered at St. Pol on May 21, and since then have been living a somewhat different life, food, accommodation being entirely different in more ways

than I dare mention. Your chapel" (i.e., in the Lille House) "I'm afraid, unless some kind soul looked after it for us, is finished. We had to clear out quickly, and I left Austin Williams with instructions to attend to the chalice, paten, crucifix, etc., and the Lamp. I understand these were taken when Bonham's car was taken from them. Hugh, Madame Clemence, Platts and I went intending to go to Rouen via Abbeville, whilst Rex, Austin and Bonham went the other way, and our treasured Renault was taken from us at Veil Hesen(?) . . . You will be glad the authorities have allowed me to hold a few meetings. I'm pleased to say our membership will be considerably increased when this packet is over. I'm not pushing things, as I'm keen that we should be a blessing rather than a curse, and those who are keen are very good men indeed. I'm finding Hugh a help too, he's a good soul, but I'm afraid we are both losing weight and shall be glad to get home again. Do write to me telling me all the news. I miss your delightful company. It was great being together, and what a success we could have made of Lille if we could have been left alone! Anyway it did a fine piece of work, and I'm thankful we were able to befriend the refugees, to be the last to leave the place, as we were." He ends with greetings to various friends.

The addresses of these two and Bonham Carter are as before, viz.: Lieut.-Col. B. H. Bonham Carter (British Prisoner of War No. 214), H. R. Pilcher (No. 346), R. H. Staton (No. 370), Oflag VII C, Germany. Envelopes must be marked at the top *Prisoner of War Post (Kriegsgefangenenpost)*.

The name of the camp where Rex and Austin Williams are imprisoned, as well as their own 'rank,' has been changed. They should now be addressed as *Engl. Zivilinternierter* (British Civilian Internee) R. R. Calkin, No. 17894 and Rev. S. A. Williams No. 17895, Ilag XIII, Germany.

Rex wrote to his family on August 14:—

"No British parcels have yet reached me . . . I have been receiving Danish Red Cross parcels . . . I have been keeping fit and cheery and as comfortable as circumstances permit; so have no anxiety if news is infrequent."

And on September 18 he wrote:—

"I have settled down to an uneventful routine, getting plenty of sleep, some reading in crowded quarters and talk with Englishmen and others, some exercise in a courtyard in this high spot, and sharing meals and smokes at a table for eight . . . Padre Austin Williams and I are fit."

FOR BLACKOUT AND BILLET

PAGES FOR READERS WHO HAVE MORE TIME AND A TASTE FOR MORE

SALVAGE

JOHN RUSKIN somewhere poses the interesting but rather futile question: "If you saw the National Gallery on fire and only had time to save one picture, which would you save?" His own choice, if I remember rightly, was Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*—a bit of an armful for one man. Quite possibly I would agree with him, quite possibly not—we'll let that argument be. But if you put the question in terms of books, which are a much commoner form of property than painted masterpieces and much more portable, most of us could contrive some kind of answer. In a way, I have just answered it in practice, and (though it is certainly impertinent to trouble readers with such a very personal matter) I will risk some account of the affair. Out of it may emerge a moral, perhaps more than one—and the British are supposed to like tales with a moral!

For the past six months, like hundreds of thousands of other folk, I have not lived in my own home, but have led a more public and communal life, being on duty elsewhere. My own home was a very modest one, full—too full, no doubt—of 'household gods'. At long intervals and mostly hurriedly, I have had the luck to visit it, to fetch away an odd pair of trousers or a screwdriver and, if not to worship the said gods, to look them in the face for a few minutes with renewed and quite special affection.

On the earliest of these visits I took one book away—my first attempt, I suppose, to answer Ruskin's question. What was it? The proper answer, I know, should be 'the Bible', but I am not counting that. It was the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. For I am a convinced supporter of Ian Fraser, who was reported in this JOURNAL last month as saying "So far as I am concerned, I am fighting to preserve the contents of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* . . . one major expression of the only kind of

thing worth fighting for". Between those covers, indeed, are gallantry and gentleness and humour, the love of beauty, home and friends and freedom, and a deep-lying sense of 'the eternal realities'. The purest essence of the British character is there. And if that should fail or perish now—

You can buy the book, of course, in any bookshop, but my shabby copy is irreplaceable. On the fly-leaf are written many names and dates, all the places and times when this old friend and I have gone together in company. 'Oxford, 1903' is the first entry; Munich is there and Verona and Bermondsey, and Peronne in the days of the Hindenburg Line, and Poperinghe during the 'Big Push', and occupied Cologne and many another. There is a story for each name—and often a poem in the book to fit—but let that be.

In the third week of the 'Battle of London' I slipped home, between sirens, for a short visit. The house had been uninhabited for weeks, garrisoned only by the 'household gods', above all by that veteran corps of books, several thousand strong. How they welcomed me with their bright or faded backs and the flash of gold titles! How I was tempted to finger them one by one, to sit in a chair and read the daylight away! But there was other business to do and little time for it. Half the windows since my previous visit had been broken by 'blast'; there was a ragged hole through the outside wall of the staircase and smashed bricks scattered down the stairs; and on the carpet in one room lay a 4 lb. chunk of coping-stone, torn from a neighbour's shattered roof and dropped through mine. I spent an hour crawling on the slates above and patching as best I could. Then I turned to go. It was not any presentiment (I am not much given to forebodings) but a strong sense of affection which led me to the bookcase as the sirens began again to sound. I

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made a swift choice of nine books, thrust them into my haversack, shut the door behind me and a minute later was in the street.

Possibly instinct, rather than deliberate reasoning, would have moved Ruskin at the moment when he snatched *Bacchus and Ariadne* from the walls of the blazing National Gallery. I fancy my own choice of books was made in the same sort of way. In case it is of the least interest to any other person I will record what it was. My hand went first to Keats (one of three editions side by side, and, alas, not the one I loved best); and then to Shelley, the selection with Anning Bell's lovely decorations. And after these came Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and *The Compleat Angler*, and the little old 'Temple' edition of White's *Natural History of Selborne*, dog-eared from the pocket of a country coat. To fill in a chink was added a tiny German picture-book of Alpine flowers. Anthologies?—so many stood on the shelf. I hesitated a moment and then took Robert Bridges' *Spirit of Man*, a shabby copy inscribed on the fly-leaf 'Cassel, 1918'. Room for two more, both pocket volumes. The first was Weymouth's translation of the *New Testament*, put into my hand by Tubby as I left the Old House at Poperinghe on a night we both thought would be its last: his own hand wrote the place and date inside the cover, 'T.H., April 28, 1918.' And, finally, I took out the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, bearing the 'marks of reading aloud on a showery Good Friday upon High Stoy in Dorset.

Immortal company—you must not deny that, though your own choice might be something quite different. For my own part, I fancy I could be cast away with these on a desert island and not tire of their company, but there's no accounting for tastes. Looking back, I think I was unusually reluctant that afternoon to leave my other books, some the friends of forty years, on the shelves of the deserted room. Arrangements were under way to move them all to a safer place, but all that takes time nowadays in London, where every repository is full (and some already burnt out) and transport must be booked far ahead. And so, in haste, we parted.

We parted. Breakfast next morning was interrupted by the telephone—my neighbour's voice announcing that the parting was final: "Incendiary bomb at 1 o'clock this morning . . . my dear man, I am sorry." He rang off and I started out. It was a perfect autumn morning, the air lively, the blue sky tempered by the endearing haze of London. The short journey by Underground was twice interrupted because the line had been bombed in the night, it seemed unending. At last I rounded the familiar corner of our street, long since made hideous with the ruins of a smashed house . . . now I stood under the grand acacia tree, with yellowed leaves, which faces our home . . . and I was looking up at a shining silver barrage balloon in an oblong patch of blue sky—enclosed by the blackened window-frame of my book-room, for not a vestige of the roof above it remained. The sight was so unexpected and surprising, it was in itself something beautiful—until, a moment later, its full implications flooded all other thoughts. I crossed the road and mounted the steps, crunching glass. The front door had been splintered in long slashes by a fireman's axe, but my key, a little grotesquely, still turned the Yale lock. I went in.

The air was heavy with the sickening smell of fire. There was no sound save the dripping of water in a dozen places. The stair carpet was slimy black, with a glitter of glass here and there. In the first room fire had made no mark, but water dropped slowly through the ceiling on the warped bedsteads, and the carpet showed at the bottom of a pond of brownish water where the floor had begun to sag in the middle. In the next room there was ruin, the ruin of charred timber and burnt paper and plaster and roofing slates, tumbled together from the upper storey through the black and broken joists, and the almost equal ruin of the bookcases and other furniture, still intact around me, on which the hoses had played. The bathroom next door was absurd, open to the sky, with a blackened bedstead hanging crazily through the rafters.

I worked my way up the charred staircase, blocked with débris. Throughout the top floor, so compact, so overfull with my small

treasures, fire had had its will. Not a vestige of two big bookcases and other furniture remained. Only the piano was recognisable—one charred board, whiskered with a tangle of wires. Where a cupboard had been, lumps of iridescent glass were molten on to fragments of china, a melancholy compendium of our household stock.

And here were the books I treasured most. They made a mound at one end of the room two feet thick; at the other they had tumbled, while still smouldering, through the floor into the room below. A gusty wind, springing up, crossed the windowless and roofless house from end to end and played with the heap of waste paper, every leaf of which was burnt deeply round the edges, when not consumed to a black wraith. Thousands of prints out of portfolios, the collection of so many years' happy hunting, joined in this eddying dance. Balancing forward on a sagging joist I caught a leaf that stirred—Duerer's engraving of *The Agony in the Garden*—and remembered the distant triumph of its discovery in the Gray's Inn Road. It was a grand bargain (in a shop, long since gone, which called itself 'Old Joe's Slaughter-house of Art!') and I went without lunch for a week to buy it. Quite possibly the great Duerer himself had handled it on his stall in the market-place of Nuremberg over four hundred years ago—and the lackeys of the modern pinchbeck prophet of Nuremberg had now done it to death. Stuck to the scorched margin of it was the fragment of another treasure—a *Foolish Virgin* of Urs Graf. I laughed again as I remembered the face of Mr. Campbell Dodgson, the greatest authority among us on these things, when I told him in the Print Room at the British Museum that it had just cost me 4d. "Where upon earth?" he asked, eagerly. "Ah," said I (impudent student), "that would be telling". And here was the lovely profile, now so marred, of that immortal nameless Italian girl from the Poldi Pezzoli Museum—and there a scrap of a delicate English drawing, a milk-maid, perhaps by Etty. But I must refrain from a catalogue of those moments of pleasure and pain.

Could any small remnant be rescued whole

from this ugly chaos? I went down to fetch a garden pitchfork and returned to the task. It was a rich soil which every stroke turned up, but no single fruit was worth the keeping.

In the downstairs room I disinterred a small desk from the deep deposit of books and plaster; it was crusted with dirt, its drawers swollen fast in their places. And every handful that hid it was precious—beautiful plates from Lowe's *Nature-printed Ferns*, a dozen mutilated pages from a noble eighteenth century folio—*Verona Illustrata* by Maffei, whose uncomfortable marble palace was my home for more than a year, a tiny first edition of Masefield's *Ballads*, the cover of a volume of Fraser's *Golden Bough*, an odd volume of Goethe, and this and that and t'other, irreparable and utterly confounded. At the bottom of the deposit lay the ruins of a considerable stamp collection, a parti-coloured mud. Digging would yield no treasure worth salvation.

I turned from the *débris* on the floor, the misplaced contents of the room above, to the bookcases still standing round the walls of this lower room. There were the old friends, orderly and apparently intact. I reached for one as a test-case—it defied my fingers with its slimy back. Every shelf-full, I found, was swollen with water from the hoses and had become a solid block which had to be wrench'd free by main force and then torn asunder. If you are a book-lover you know that doing violence like that goes right to the heart. Hour after hour, for a whole day, the melancholy work of salvage went on, until the dusk began to fill the unglazed window-openings and the sirens sounded again.

* * * * *

The tale may be tedious but there is still the moral which I promised. In the first place, it may well be proven by such accidents of fortune—nowadays extremely commonplace—that no man should be tied to many possessions. I nod affirmative as I remember a walk and talk with Brother Douglas on a snow-bound hill years ago. I gave him news of a mutual friend: "He has just come into a lot of money", I said. He turned to me in quick and genuine distress—"Poor chap", he said, "I am sorry". I laughed aloud and

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glanced at the brown-habited figure, the face hidden in its pointed cowl against the freezing wind, which strode by my side. It was the authentic form and voice of St. Francis, I thought, talking stark commonsense as that 'little poor man', under comical guises, was wont to do. Unencumbered by 'things' a man is *free*, free to mix with the whole world of men, free (in the words of the Scots catechism) "to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever". That was the joyful truth taught by the man of Assisi, that was the reason the Church called him a saint and that men still find him irresistibly attractive. I hasten to disclaim the Franciscan virtue. But, a little less encumbered, I *do* now experience some new sense of freedom.

And the second moral seems to dash the first rudely, to cancel it out. Having lost things one is free, according to means and opportunity, to start acquiring them again. Man is an acquisitive animal, we all know, and some men (I fear I am one) are born collectors of the varied junk this world so richly strews about. In my time I have collected most things—'conkers', stamps and coins, fossils and shells and pressed flowers, brass-rubblings and prints, pictures and books, and some things too absurd to be detailed. None of these collections would ever appear at Christie's, but most of them have had a far greater use than the sale-room. They have cost little money but many eager days in the sun and rain on hill or seashore; they have won long friendships with the like-minded; they have provided, at any moment, rich

evenings of work and entertainment at home —when the collections strew the floor in mounting confusion and the talk runs late with friends. In the teeth of St. Francis I shall begin—I have already begun—to 'pick things up' again.

Finally, my brethren, a third moral which I believe to be a good one and the chiefest. The war has changed values for most of us—it will do so, let us expect, for all of us before it is done. Human life, it is manifest, does not count quite the same as in peace-time. One railway smash involving five lives used to fill columns of the newspaper; five hundred air raid casualties on a single night now claim two lines of the *communiqué*. We have not grown suddenly callous, nor are private griefs less poignant and lasting. But against the tremendous background, the paramount cause, and in the presence of the enormous issue of civilisation which is at stake, death and destruction are seen in their due proportion. Men perish but the cause goes on, greater than themselves, demanding all they have to give. "Who dies if England live?" That is not at this time mock-heroic. That is what all of us feel. It is solemn and most simple truth. And in the face of it my tale looks mighty trivial, not worth the telling. It is but a sample, thousands of times repeated, thousands of times far out-done, in the experience of others. I have lost a little where many have lost all. Eighteen months ago such an accident would have seemed catastrophic. But now—go to it! There is no more to say.

BARCLAY BARON.

DESPERATELY WANTED—THE CHURCH

THE atmosphere was laden with the scent of several tobaccos and the smoke of cigarettes. The time had come for tankards to be filled for the second round. The company was mixed—the enthusiasm of the young met the sober maturity of the middle-aged—a Padre and layman talked freely and frankly round an age-old but ever relevant topic, the Church. The destructive criticism of the ardent rebel (which is necessary) had given way to the more sober discussion of constructive suggestion.

The Padre listened intently, but being unable to restrain himself any longer, was about to make his contribution. He was abruptly forestalled by one of the younger men, "Yes, I know, Padre, you are mainly in agreement with us, but you are going to remind us that we are the Church and invite us to come inside and do something about it."

"We have often been caught that way before," blurred out one of the older men.

"That's it," said another, "the trouble is

OUR PRISONERS OF WAR

we are not at all sure that the Church is worth getting inside, or even worth saving."

That phrase struck a reciprocal note of doubt in the Padre's mind. A spring of doubt which called forth at the same time in him a reckless determination to build anew.

He must say something. "I know there are large numbers of people now who under the stress of national peril are finding Christianity useful and feel the Church must be preserved at all costs. On the other hand there are many more who for years have taken the line that the Church could be ignored, yet every day that attitude was proving itself bankrupt of any real result in achieving those Christian qualities in the life of the nation which most men agreed were desperately necessary. Look what Germany is doing today for her Youth with the help of bad religion. Yet there are many people who act as though the spiritual factor can be ignored in work amongst youth."

"I agree, Padre," remarked one of the younger men, "and another thing, I think there is too much practical religion about nowadays. Think of all the societies and movements which exist outside the Church for the purpose of attempting a practical application of the truths and principles for which it stands. It all goes to show that the gap between religious institutions and everyday life is rapidly widening and there is something wrong in the presentation of religion and our religious capacities. What we want is a reclothing and a revitalisation in some practical form of the imperishable truths of the religion of Christ."

Here the Padre thought he must take the bull by the horns; once and for all he would deal with this haunting thought, is the Church worth saving?

He plunged. "Look here; when you talk about revitalising religion in a practical form you have first of all got to tackle the problem of the Church. For good or ill it is the religious power in the land and it cannot be ignored. Neutrality where the Church is concerned is as much out of date as it is in international affairs."

They could all see their host was now really in earnest. They dared not interrupt.

"Most of you," he went on, "are members of Movements existing to apply Christian principles in everyday life outside the Church. Yet the accredited and ordained agents of that body are expected to provide spiritual leadership in your groups. Have you ever really thought of that point?"

One of the older men, a seasoned campaigner in Toc H, had a ready answer for that one. "Why yes, Padre. One of the aims of these outside Movements, as you call them, is to hand men on again into the life of the old parent body of Christ's Church in its widest sense—to send them back better Anglicans, better Baptists or Methodists, as the case may be."

"That's just where I think you, an exponent of practical religion, become very theoretical. It's all wishful thinking because it just doesn't work like that," replied the Padre.

"And where it does work that way do the men who come back into the Church make any difference to the life of organised religion? You all agree it needs changing, but do you really help?"

There was no rapid reply to such questions as these. They all felt it would be best, having got this far, to let the Padre continue in full flow. He took a long pull at his pipe and prepared to lay this awful ghost at last—is the Church worth saving?

"All you Movements for week-day religion will fizzle out unless we achieve some new form of co-operation. We overlap and dissipate our energies—all very well meaning. For real co-operation we shall have to be prepared to give up a measure of our own identity and we will as a new unifying force work into and through the Church. But because of what we think and then do it will not be the same Church as we see now. We shall come together and seek out what it is that can bind us all to each other. Then we shall begin to co-operate actively with all those who are trying, as best they can, to do God's work in the world."

There was no more to be said just then. Outside the 'all-clear' had sounded, but they had not noticed it.

DAVID WORTH.

THE ELDER BRETHREN

On Active Service

JOHNSON.—On October 2, in hospital, BASIL JAMES JOHNSON, L.A.C., R.A.F. Elected 27.9.39.

OTTERWAY.—In September, killed in action, FRANCIS JAMES OTTERWAY, Pilot, R.A.F., late Jobmaster of Twickenham Branch. Elected October, 37.

SMITH.—On September 8, killed by a landmine in Kent, K. L. Smith, Corporal, R.E., a member of Taunton Branch. Elected 5.5.37.

STONE.—On September 30, killed on active service, WALTER EDWARD STONE, a member of Quarndon (Derby) Group. Elected 7.1.33.

WILLIAMS.—On October 26, died of pneumonia, BERTRAM CYRIL WILLIAMS, R.A.S.C., a member of Slough Branch. Elected July, 38.

* * * *

BARTLAM.—In October, HARRY BARTLAM, a founder member and former Secretary of Newton Abbot Branch. Elected 30.7.30.

In Memoriam:

All the world that knows anything first-hand about the bitter fighting in Flanders in the last war associates it with the Second Army and Lord Plumer who commanded it. And always inseparable from Plumer's name is that of his Chief of Staff and close friend, 'Tim' Harington, a rare partnership of two very fine men. Both of them played a decisive part in the continued life of Talbot House in Poperinghe, and both of them were later to become Presidents of Toc H in peace-time.

Sir Charles Harington had a long and distinguished military career. As a captain in the South African war he first became known to Colonel Plumer, his future chief. As a Major he went to the Battles of the Marne and Aisne in 1914, on the staff of the III Corps, and then moved up to Flanders, where, except for a brief interlude with Lord Plumer's force in Italy in 1917, he remained until March, 1918, when he came home as deputy to Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. After the war he had the greatest opportunity and achievement of his career. As Commander-in-Chief of the

BEETHAM.—On August 23, JOHN HENRY BEETHAM, aged 30, a founder member of Ambleside Group and a member of Lakeland Area Executive.

CAVE.—On September 13, at Adelaide, South Australia, WALTER ASHBY ('Bob') CAVE, a founder member of Adelaide Central Group and for ten years first Area Secretary of South Australia. Elected 7.9.25.

HARINGTON.—On October 22, General Sir CHARLES ('Tim') HARINGTON, aged 68, one of the earliest friends of Talbot House and a President of Toc H.

KINSEY-MORGAN.—In November, E. C. KINSEY-MORGAN, a founder member and Treasurer of Newport (Mon.) Branch. Elected 14.1.26.

MCCORMICK.—On October 16, Canon PAT MCCORMICK, D.S.O., first Padre of Croydon Branch, 1924-26. Elected 1.1.22.

WRENCH.—On July 20, JAMES WRENCH, a founder member of Clitheroe Group. Elected 14.1.38.

'Tim' Harington

Army of the Black Sea, when the Turks defeated the Greeks in 1921, he faced Mustapha Kemal with such coolness and firmness that he saved us from a very dangerous situation and averted another war.

He was then in turn G.O.C.-in-Chief Northern Command, stationed at York, G.O.C.-in-Chief, Western Command, India, and Governor of Gibraltar. In all three of these appointments he worked hard for Toc H. He promised to visit every Toc H unit in Yorkshire, if possible, and he was seen at almost all of them. In India he never neglected a chance of meeting our members, and the start of Toc H in Gibraltar, during a visit by Tubby, was due to him. (Harington House, built as its home there, has unfortunately been recently destroyed by enemy action).

'Tim' Harington's devotion to Toc H had two grounds—his own belief in, and love for, it and the last behest of Lord Plumer, his beloved chief. When he came to write Plumer's life he devoted a chapter to Toc H which opens thus:—

His last charge to me was, "Build up Toc H in the Army." It is often the case that soldiers and others, when their services are no longer required in their professions, find themselves lost without occupation. It is always a comfort to me that, when I finish my Army life shortly, I shall have the above task always before me. It will indeed be a labour of love and though I can never hope to carry it out as he would have wished, yet I sincerely hope that I may be able to drive a few pegs into the Toc H road which he so much desired to see.

In this spirit he worked for us as long as he was able. He was a member of the Central

Executive and backed us always with his special knowledge in dealings with the Services; he served his turn as a churchwarden at All Hallows. Failing health took him away from London and he died at Cheltenham, where as a schoolboy he had learnt to play cricket, the game which was his passion. Thoroughness, constancy, courage, a great charm of manner and warm-hearted friendship were the marks of the man all his friends knew as 'Tim.'

'Bob' Cave

An Australian member writes:—

'Bob' Cave is a household name in the life of Toc H in South Australia—in fact he is known and loved throughout the Commonwealth. His is the seventh name on the State register of members and he was initiated in September, 1925, by Tubby during his Australian tour. He became a member of the Adelaide Central Group and was the first Area Secretary of the State, a position which he held—for some time in an honorary capacity—for 10 years. To his untiring energy Toc H owes more than its older members of those days can remember, not only in spreading of Toc H

in the suburbs of Adelaide, but in many of the scattered country townships where Branches and Groups to-day witness to the soundness of his pioneering. The sacrifices of both time and money which he gladly made were but an indication of the joy he received from serving the Movement and its men, for his love for Toc H was no passing attachment—it was a way of life which was expressed in everything he did. The love of Christ radiated from every thought and action of his, and we offer God our thanks for Bob's friendship and for his life of quiet and enduring witness.

A MIXED BAG

The Coventry House

A Coventry member, reporting the complete destruction of the Toc H Club for Service men and Munition workers on the tragic night of November 16, writes:

"There was quite a crowd at the House—30 or more—but we were helpless. An incendiary fell in the garden and we at once attacked it. It exploded in our faces, but did little damage. One by one the window and door frames came away bodily; the heavy shutters were rent asunder in the kitchen where most of us were taking cover. Later the holly hedge in front of the house caught fire but was put out with a bucket of water—we did not know then that this was all the water we had, that the main supply had failed. About 1 a.m. the worst blow fell. Dozens of incendiaries fell all around . . . five minutes later the kitchen ceiling fell down ablaze. Without water we could do nothing at all . . . It should be put on record that Jack Lohan, our Jobby, acted magnificently throughout. It was he who put out the fire in the hedge and he was all for fighting the bigger fire in the House. I'm afraid I stopped him—without any fire-fighting equipment (beyond two pumps and no water) it would have been risking life on a hopeless task. . . You can perhaps imagine how we felt watching the thing we loved dis-

appear. We all felt this was a major personal catastrophe . . ."

There were no casualties in the House and Mr. and Mrs. Tendall, the Wardens, have evacuated from Coventry for the time. The Branch Pilot writes:—

"You need have no fear, not only spite of this ordeal, but because of it, Toc H must continue here."

We all send the Coventry members a message of sympathy and 'Well done!'

The World Chain of Light

The Lamp will be lit in All Hallows Church at 9 p.m. on December 11, the Birthday of Talbot House, and units round the world (those West of London that night, those Eastward on December 12) may wish to hold the Ceremony of Light at 9 p.m. by their local time and thus forge the traditional Chain of Light.

The Toc H Diary

We regret that it is not possible to publish a *Toc H Diary* for 1941.

AN ALL-NIGHT SERVICES CLUB

On July 26 FRANK GILLARD, whose voice has several times been heard before by listeners to West of England broadcasts on 'Toc H subjects,' gave the following short wireless talk.

RAILWAY junctions are pretty busy places these days. On top of all the ordinary traffic the platforms are crowded with men in uniform, some going, some coming, some . . . just waiting. Waiting. Three or four hours to kill, just hanging around. That's not pleasant at the best of times, but at night, in the blackout, when you are tired and fed up and hungry—well, it's pretty rotten.

The good people of a West Country town got worried about all this; they felt that it was up to them to do something about it. Toc H really set the ball rolling. They got the idea of running an all-night Hostel, where men in the Forces could just drop in and pass the time comfortably. But they realised that the whole community would like to lend a hand in the job, so they got the help and backing of the Mayoress' War Committee. Luckily, Toc H and the Scouts share a large house which is very strategically situated for such a job. It's just half-way between the two main railway stations, and only three or four minutes away from each. This building, then, became the Hostel. Local people quickly provided all the necessary equipment. The Mayoress made an appeal, and mattresses, blankets, pillows, linen and so on, came pouring in. A panel of sixty or more men was drawn up, each man being willing to spend one night a month at the Hostel, voluntarily, acting as host. The Hostel was furnished and open in a very short time.

Now, suppose you were, let's say, a sailor, and you stepped off a train at this city to-night. You would find someone at your elbow in no time, asking if you would like to go along to the Hostel. There's no doubt about your answer, and you would be directed or taken along, straight away. A couple of cheerful hosts would be there to welcome you. You would have a good wash, with unlimited hot water and a clean towel. Then, if you were hungry, the canteen would produce a nice tasty supper at an incredibly small cost. After that, if you would like to

read or write, you could do it in rooms just like home, with carpets on the floor, and bowls of flowers about, and good, comfortable easy chairs. You could even telephone your wife if you wanted to. When you were ready, you would go upstairs to bed. An hour before your train was due, you would be called with a cup of tea and some hot shaving water. If you wanted some breakfast, the canteen would oblige again, and then off you would go. Apart from the food—and that's all sold at cost price—everything would be absolutely free. Now, just compare a night spent like that with a night hanging around on a miserable railway platform. What a difference!

And was there a need for this effort? My word, the figures answer that! The Hostel has not been running for six months yet, but already just on 2,500 men have slept there. It's been such a success that the idea has developed still further. Just outside the entrance to one of the railway stations they have started a canteen. This place is always open, day and night. It's for men who are only waiting for a short time between trains. Here again, willing volunteers do all the work. Ladies look after it by day, and men take over at night, though there is always one lady there at night to tackle the cooking. You see, when a train arrives, they often get forty or fifty hungry men suddenly blowing in. The first one fancies a fried egg, and immediately the other forty-nine want the same! The poor chap behind the counter, not being a professional, gets properly sunk when he's up against such an order as this. So the ladies very gallantly arrange that one frying-pan expert is on duty every night. This canteen, too, is a roaring success.

When men leave the Hostel or the canteen they always say the same thing: "What a pity there isn't a place like this everywhere." Yet, you know, there *could* be. It just wants somebody to start the ball rolling. It is a very worth while job. . . . Is there, by any chance, a need in *your* district?

OUR PRISONERS OF WAR

TOC H PUBLICATIONS

All communications regarding publications should be sent to the Registrar, Toc H,
47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1. Postage is extra on all publications unless otherwise stated.

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